



# Dilemmas of Working with Indigenous Clients in the NT

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- **Student Support Staff**
  - 8 School Psychologists for whole of NT
  - School Counsellors: 9 psychologists; 2 counsellors; 15 social workers
  - Others
- 
- A Share in the Future: A Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory (Bruce Wilson, 2013)
  - Learning Lessons (Collins, 1999)

# Overview

- Data
- 6 disadvantages + anecdotes
- Conclusion

- The NT has a small diverse population spread over an area of 1.35 million square kilometres, 1.7 times larger than New South Wales and six times the size of Victoria, but with a population of 231,292
- Around 120,000 live in Darwin
- Thinly spread population outside of Darwin – delivering services poses massive logistical and economic challenges

- About 30% of the NT population, or 68,850 at June 2011, are Indigenous. They are growing at about 1.3% per year
- By contrast, Indigenous people represent 3% of the Australian population as a whole
- Indigenous people in the NT represent about 10% of the national Indigenous population of 669,900 – this population includes the most disadvantaged groups of Australians



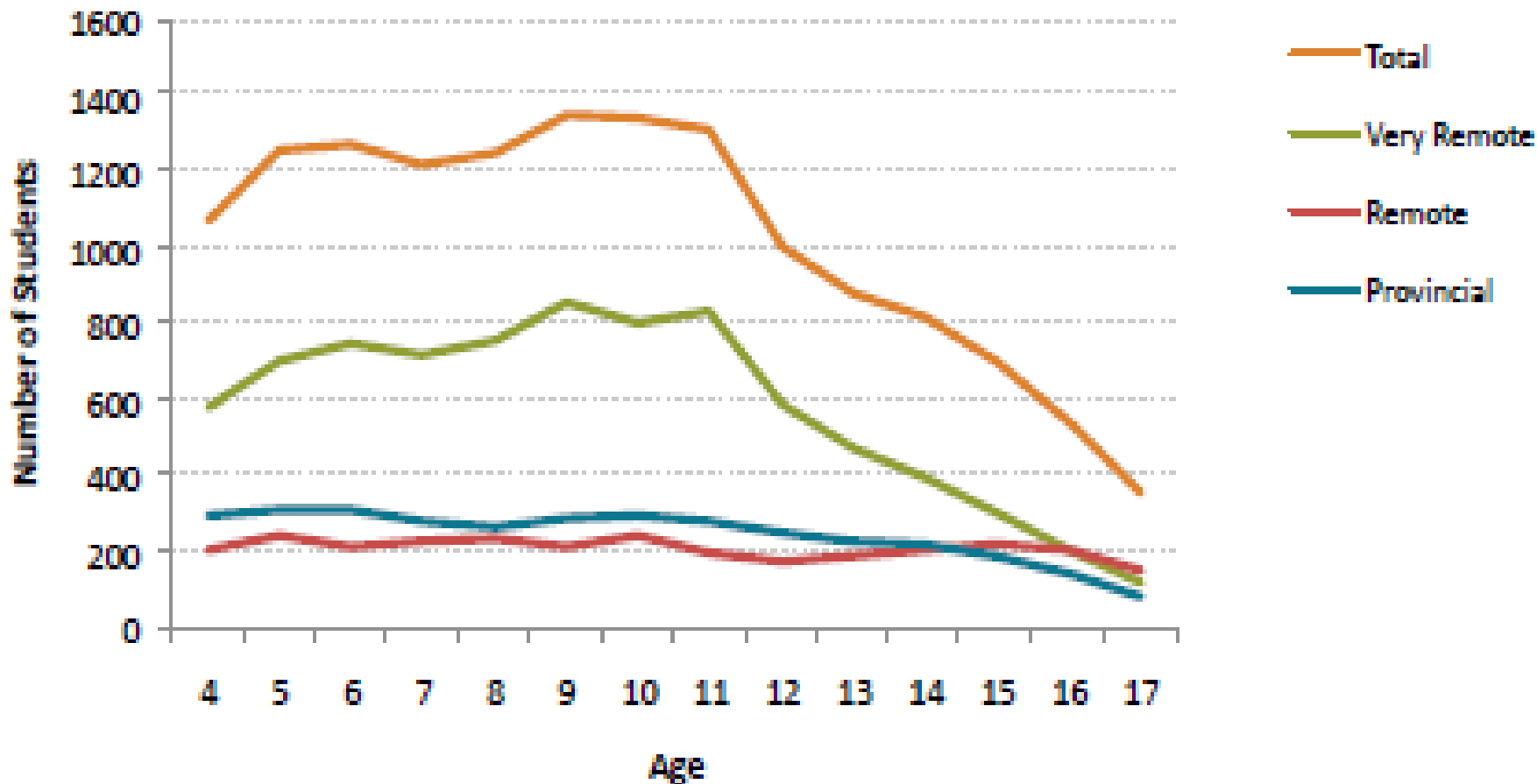
- The median weekly income of Indigenous Territorians 15 years and over is \$269, compared with \$925 for non-Indigenous residents
- Employment: 33% for Indigenous – 77% for non-Indigenous. In remote and very remote areas, employment is below 30%
- Nationally, 35% of Indigenous Australians live in major cities – 58% of NT Indigenous population live in very remote areas
- 75% of NT's very remote population are Indigenous
- 9 out of 10 of school-age Indigenous population are very remote
- 40,000 = very remote; 15,000 = remote; 14,000 = Darwin
- Mobility of very remote Indigenous people is very rare

## Student Numbers by Geolocation and Indigeneity (DoE Enrolment and Attendance data, 2012)

Indigenous Status	Geolocation	Enrolments
Indigenous	Provincial	3 436
	Remote	2 962
	Very Remote	8 351
	Total	14 749
Total	Provincial	17 530
	Remote	6 283
	Very Remote	9 610
	Total	33 423



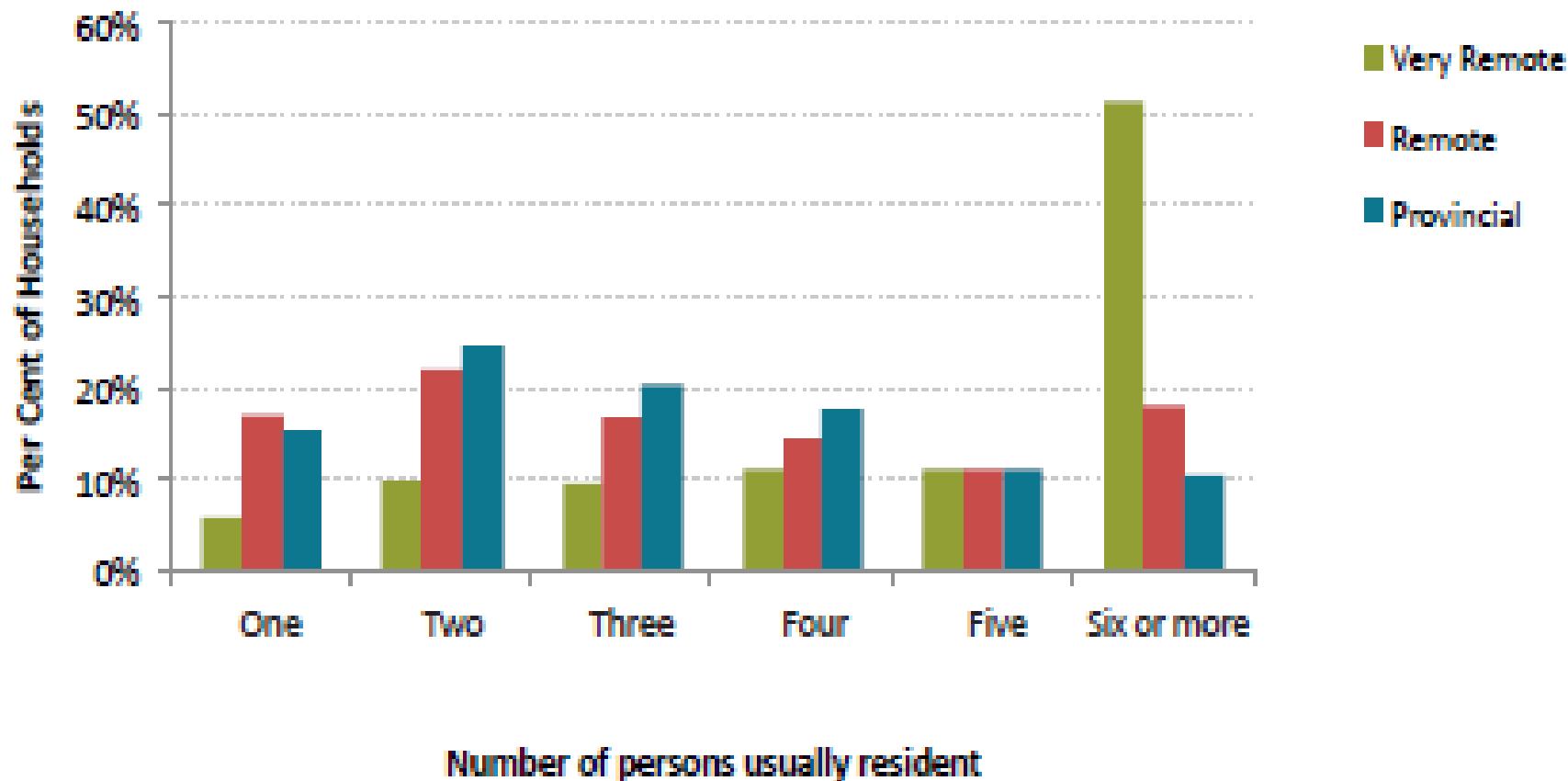
## NT Govt School Indigenous Enrolments in 2012 by Geolocation



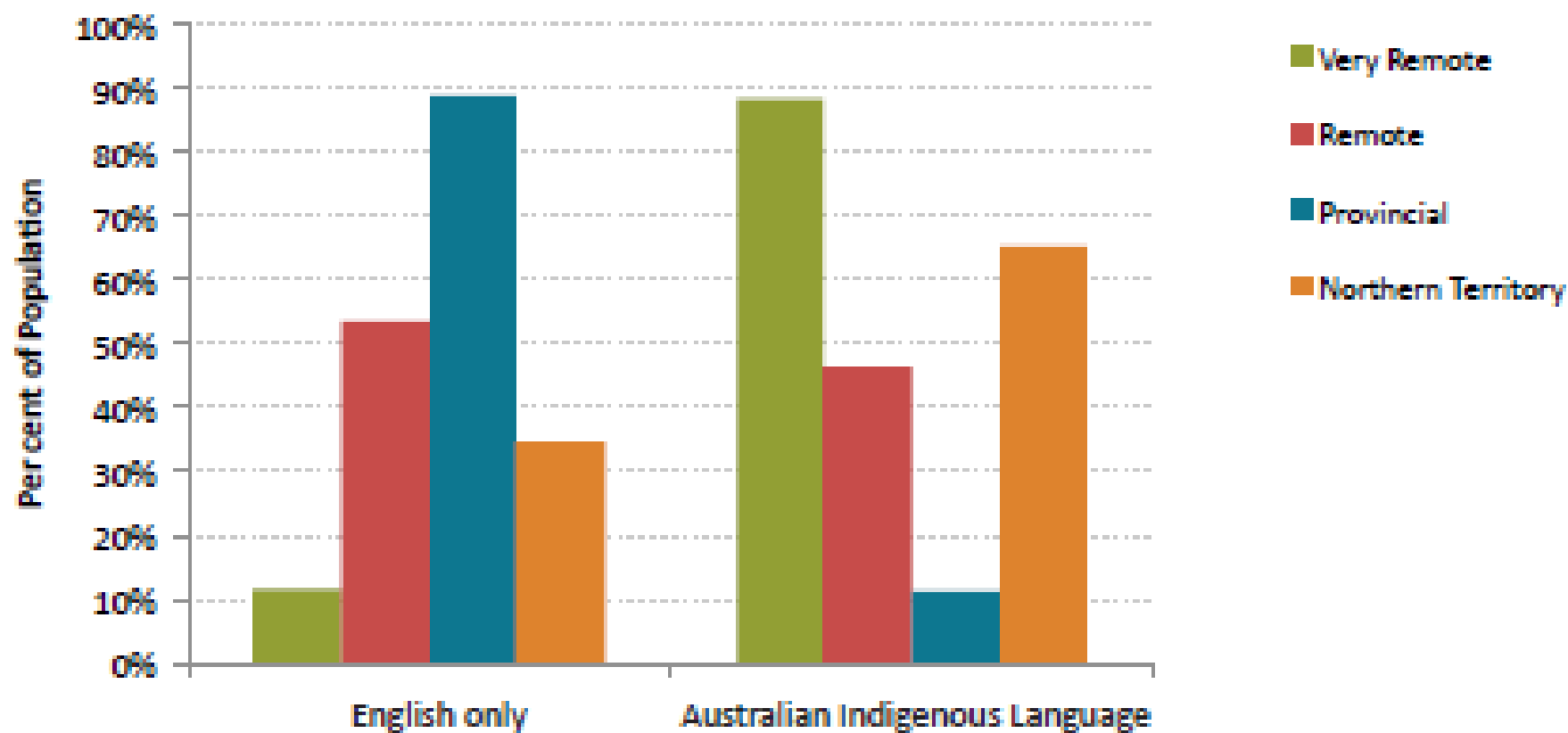




## NT Indigenous Households by Number of Persons Usually Resident and Geolocation

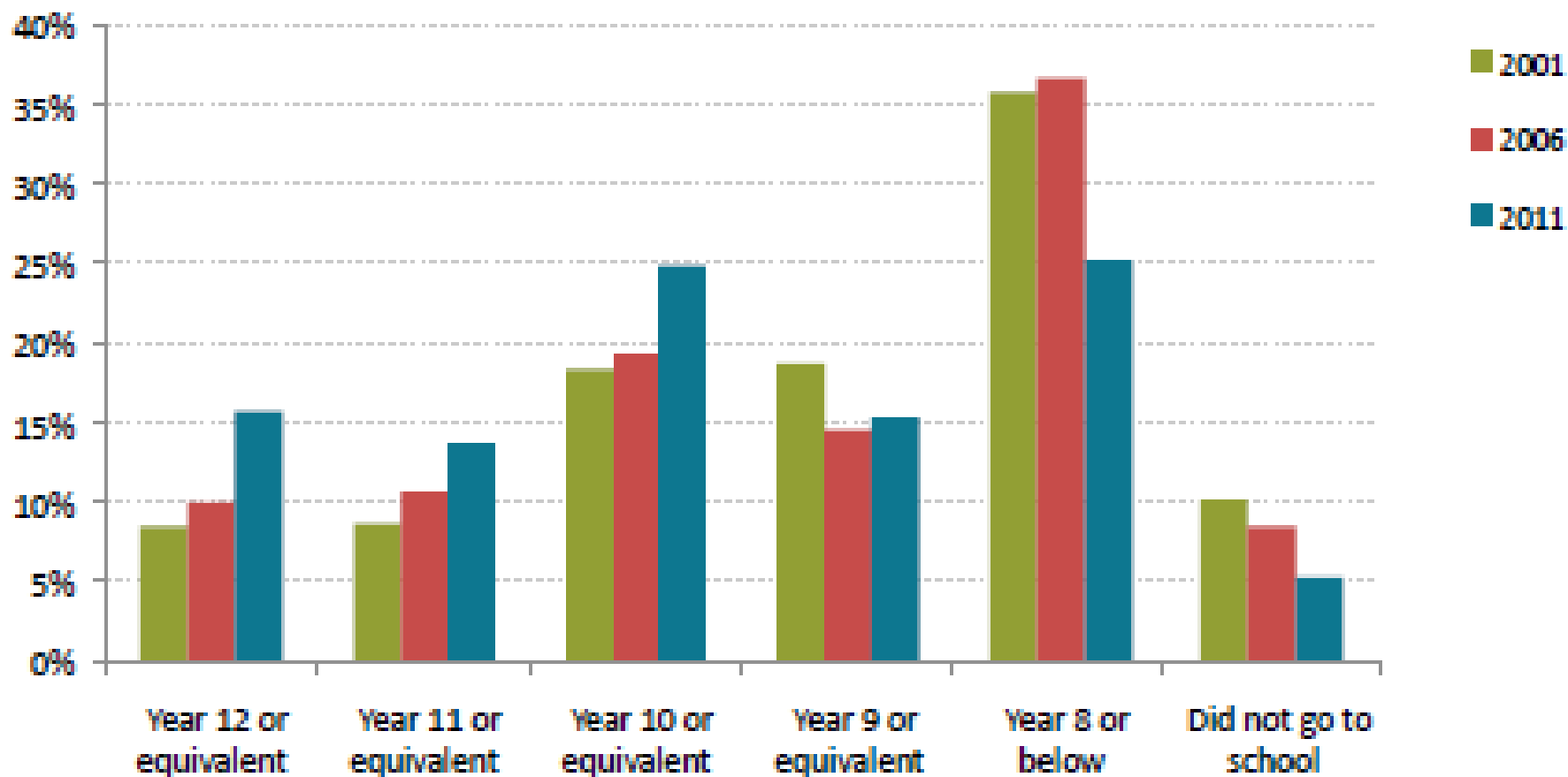


NT Indigenous Population by Language Spoken at Home and Geolocation

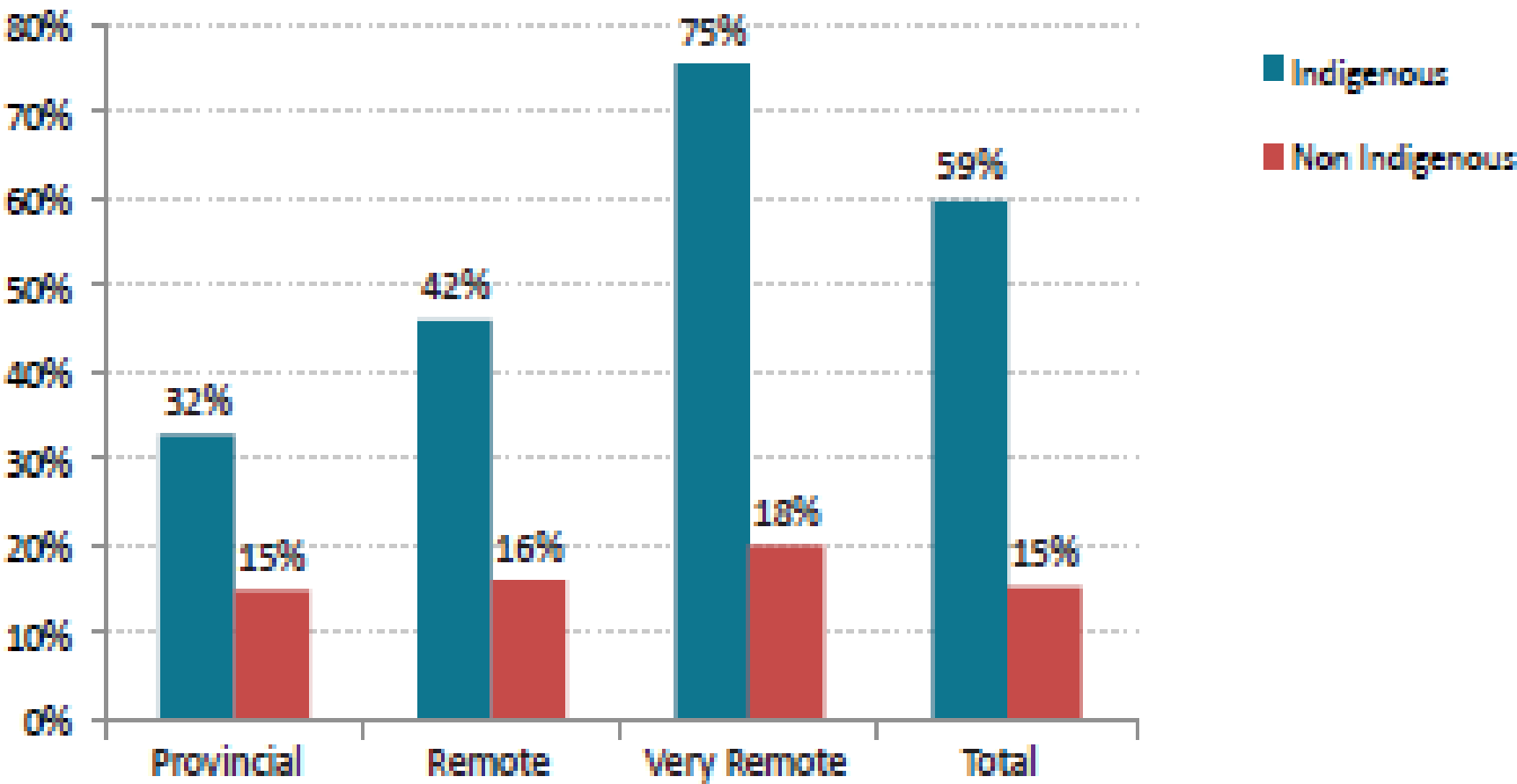




## Highest Level of Schooling in NT Indigenous Population 15 years and over, by Census Year

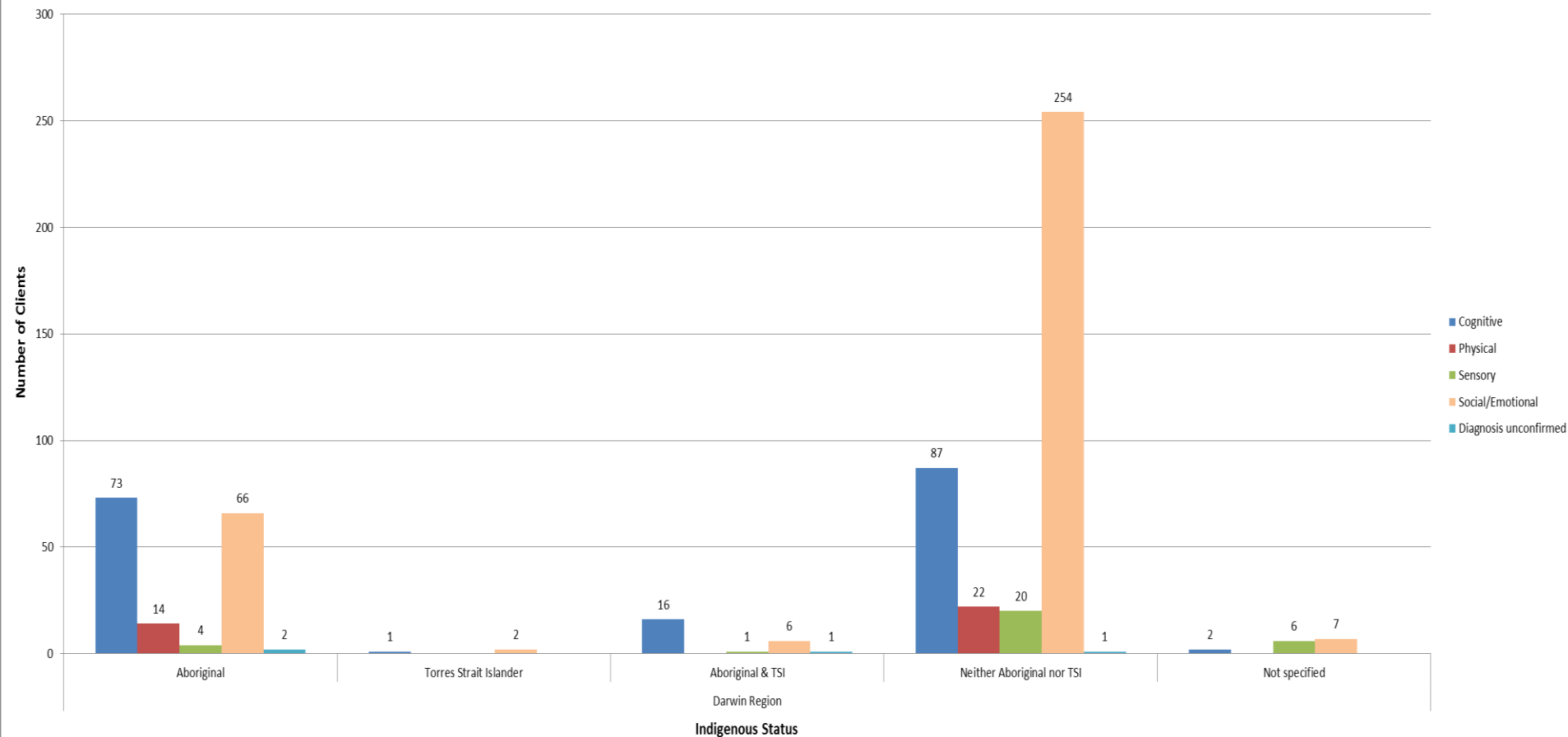


Students Attending 80% or less by Indigenous Status and Geolocation



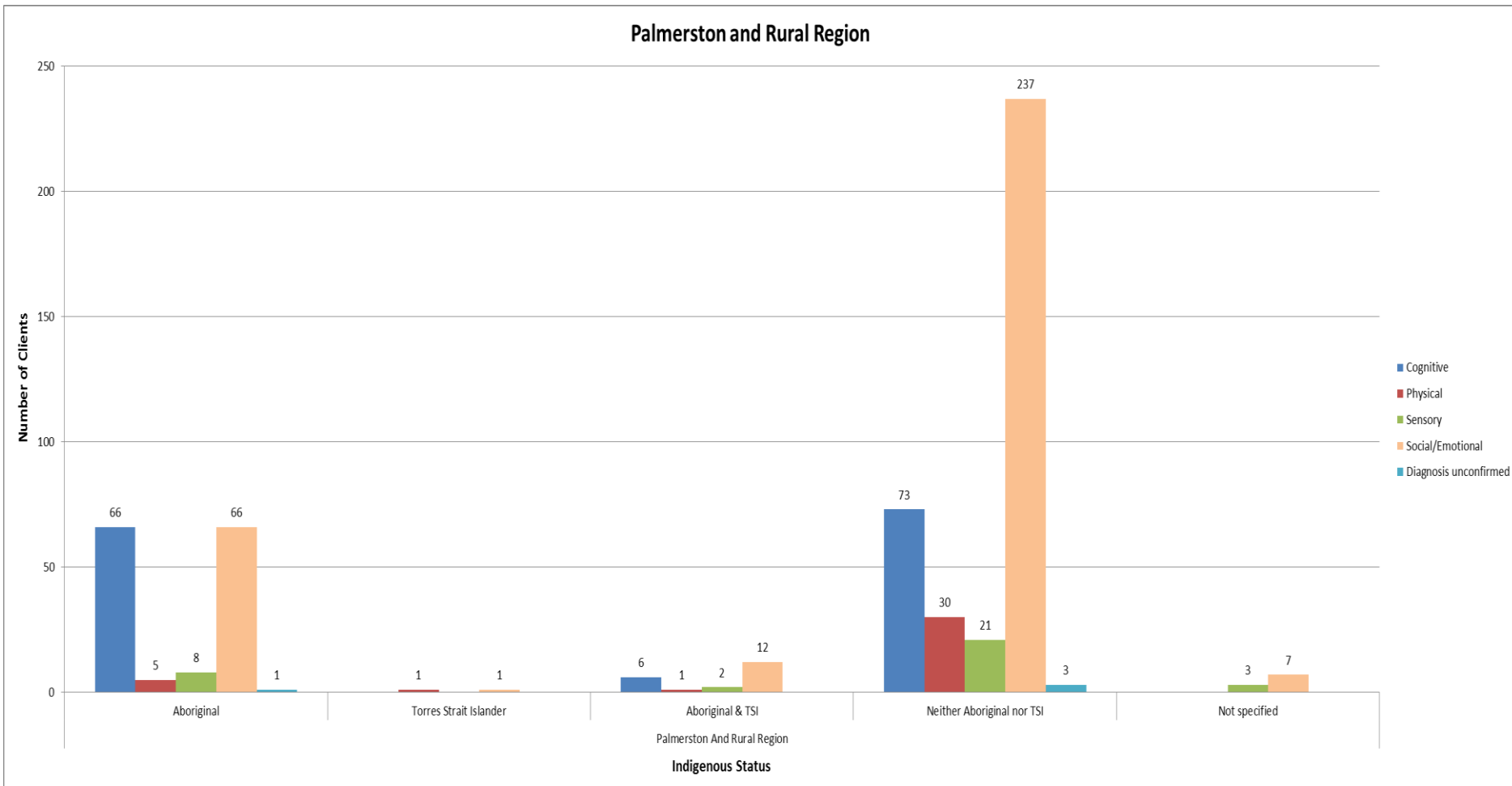
## Number of Students in Darwin Region by Disability Category

Darwin Region

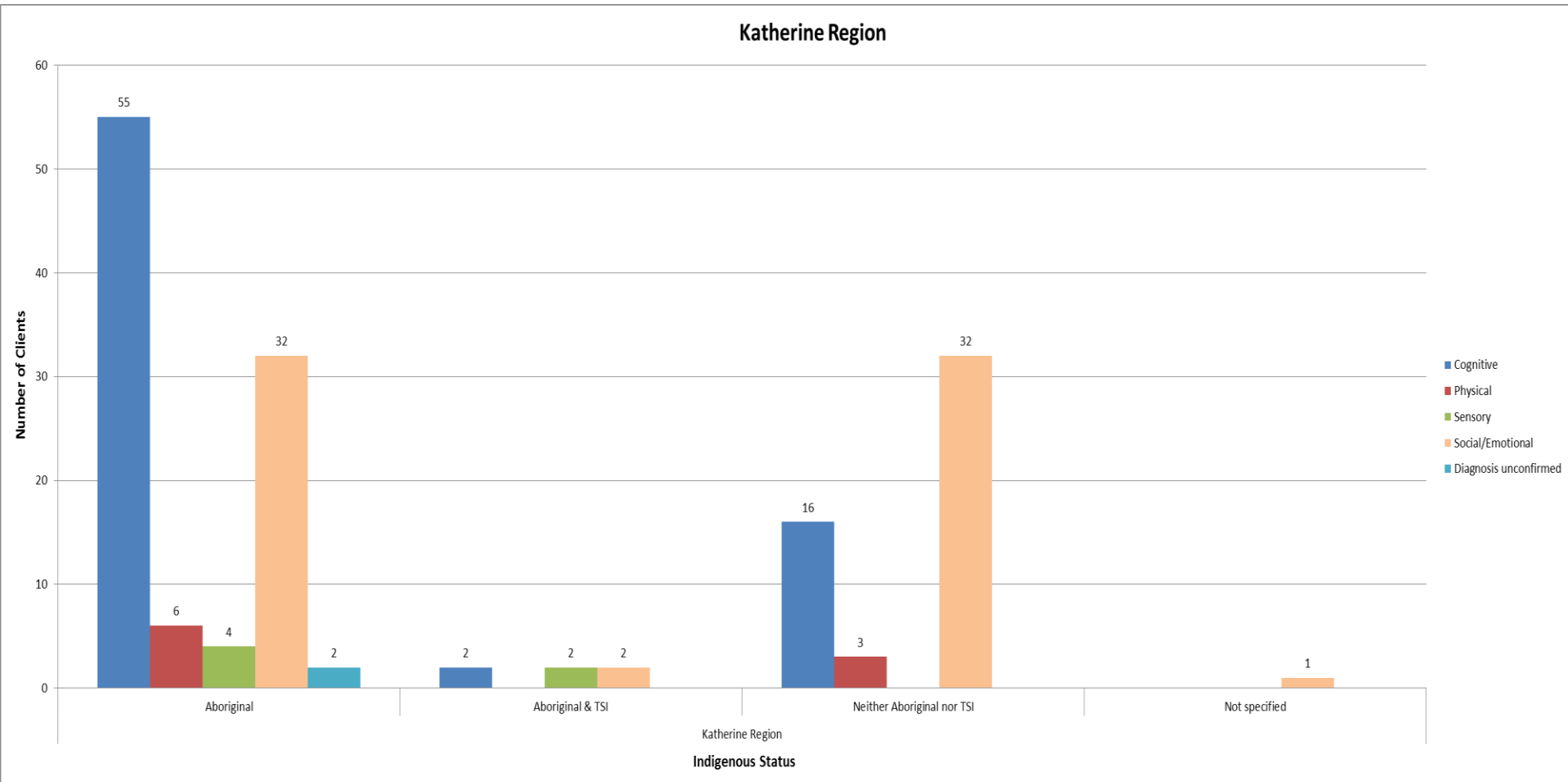




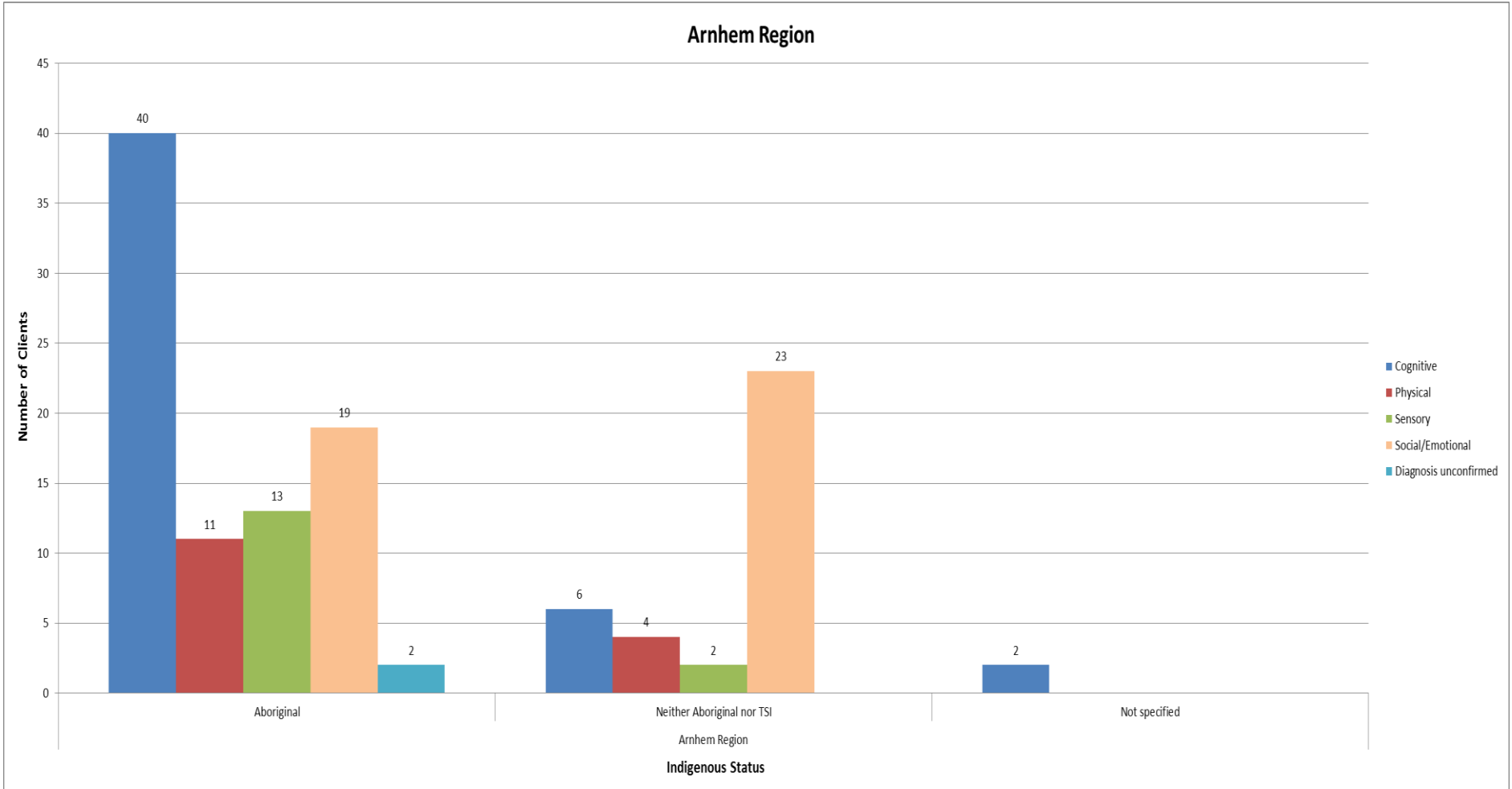
## Number of Students in Palmerston and Rural Region by Disability Category



## Number of Students in Katherine Region by Disability Category



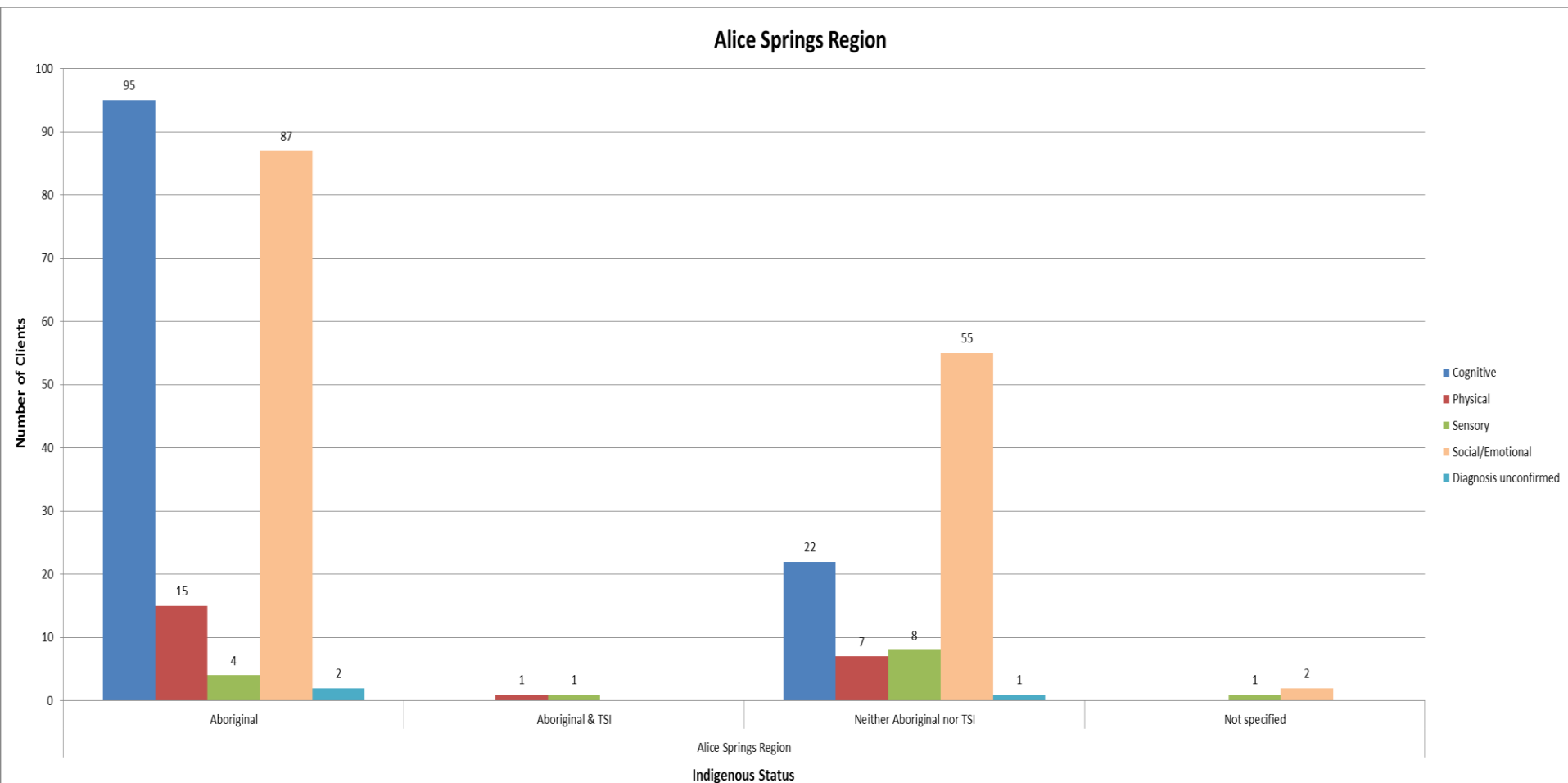
Number of Students in Arnhem Region by Disability Category



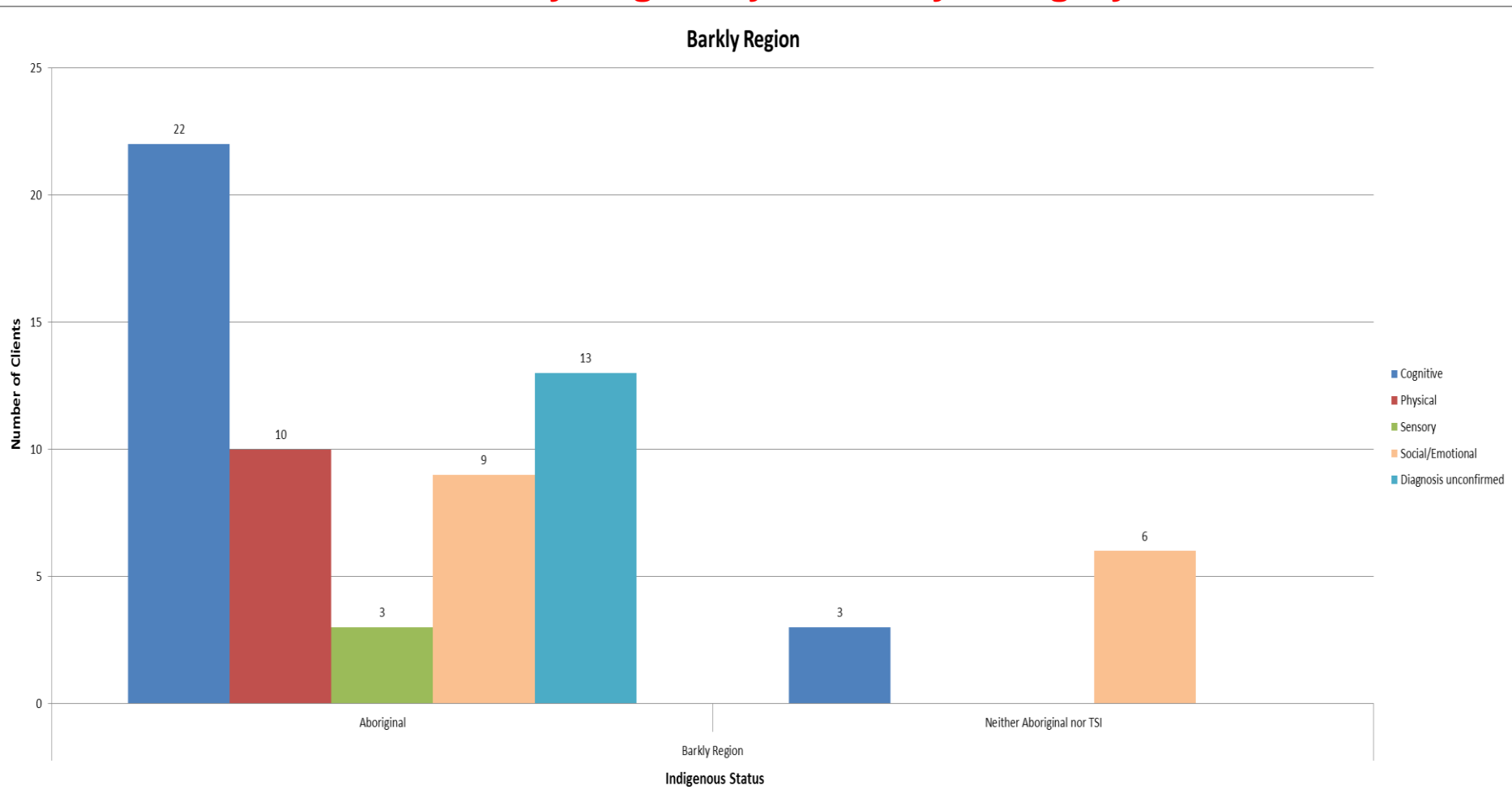




## Number of Students in Alice Springs Regions by Disability Category

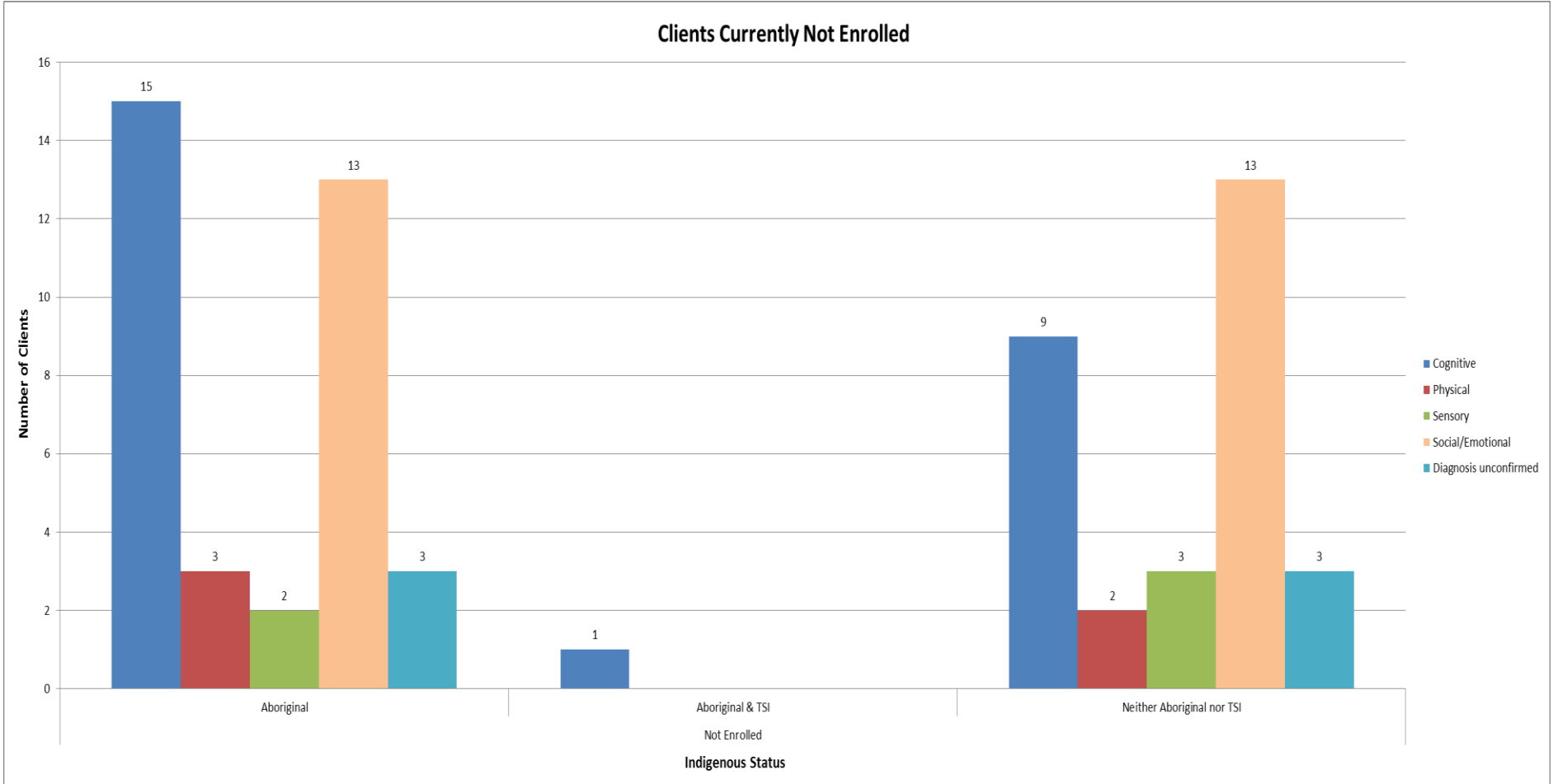


## Number of Students in Barkly Region by Disability Category





Number of Students Not Enrolled by Disability Category





# Disadvantages

## 1 English as a Second Language

English is foreign in remote and very remote schools  
Teacher the only one who speaks English

## 2 Conductive Hearing Loss

Behaviour problems are disproportionately associated  
with hearing-loss affected children  
Otitis Media rates among the highest in the world  
3 staff for whole of NT

# Disadvantages

When 1 and 2 combined – poorer academic outcomes  
*Now Hear* program trialled in 6 remote schools in 2013

- *Acoustics and amplification*
- *Classroom support*
- *Ear health*
- *Identification and management of hearing loss*
- *Program sustainability*

Excellent results – significant improvements

147 government schools in the NT



## 3 Poverty and Social Disadvantage

Lack of services:

9-year-old boy with severe Conduct Disorder bordering on sociopathic tendencies plus cruelty to animals and other children

Family 1 hour south of Katherine

Time factor:

9-year-old boy with suspected ASD – 2 years

9-year-old girl with trauma history – 3.5 years



## 4 High Mobility of Families

8-year-old boy enrolled at 4 different schools 10 times within 15 weeks

9-year-old girl with trauma history – 8 schools

One remote community's population significantly increases during swimming season

80% attendance at school before swimming

positive health outcomes due to high amounts of chlorine



## **5 Staffing and Travelling**

Positive – Lync technology for communication

## **6 Cultural Conflicts**

Deaths in families

Football

Show

Royalties from land





## Conclusion

### **Complex array of difficulties including:**

- Social and emotional
- Speech and language – 9-year-old boy
- Trauma
- Alcohol and drugs
- FASD – only around 40 with diagnoses in NT Govt schools (sensitive topic)
- Suicide and self-harm
- Vision – sand, grit, wind and flies
- Adolescent boys (Conduct Disorder, ADHD, ODD) re initiation

**Dilemma: Complexity of valid diagnoses**